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SUBJECT: JEM'S SENIOR LEADERS DISCUSS POLITICAL PROCESS (PART I of II)

1. (SBU) SUMMARY. On June 27-28, three senior Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) leaders in London separately met poloff and discussed Darfur's political process. Leaders appeared confident of JEM's position following their May 10 attack on Omdurman, though frustrated by the stalled political process whose "window of opportunity is now coming to a close." These leaders were also extremely critical of the nomination of Djibril Bassol as the United Nation's and African Union's joint chief mediator. This cable is the first of two parts on JEM's senior leadership in London. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) On June 27, poloff met separately Dr. Gibriel Ibrahim (JEM's Senior Economic Advisor and brother of Khalil Ibrahim) and later JEM spokesman Ahmed Hussein Adam. On June 28, poloff met JEM's lead negotiator Ahmed Tugot, who was released from Egyptian detention in late May following the JEM attack.

POLITICAL PROCESS

3. (SBU) All three JEM leaders emphasized that JEM is ready for negotiations and that the window of opportunity for talks is quickly closing. They noted that JEM currently has no direct communication with the GoS. Ibrahim stated that he is not concerned about the lack of direct contact with the GoS, because, "there will be a time when they [GoS officials] will come running to us." Ahmed Tugot stated that despite this lack of communication there are senior informers within the NCP who tell JEM leaders what they need to know. Tugot believes that negotiations with the GoS are inevitable, because the government "has no choice but to seriously engage with us, whether they want to or not." Tugot added, "before May 10 the GoS wanted to engage only to drag out the process and keep control. That has changed, especially as we are on equal ground now."

WHY TALKS NOW?

4. (SBU) According to Ibrahim, talks should either begin now without the chief mediator, or it will take months before the process can begin as the chief mediator will need several months to prepare himself and his office. Ibrahim also stated that the GoS will relax once the seasonal rains start, and that the urgency of finding a negotiated solution will decrease. "If the GoS said to us tomorrow we want to talk, we will," said Ibrahim.

5. (SBU) Ibrahim, Adam, and Tugot also claimed that given the GoS's extensive military losses in the May 10 attack, the GoS should be more willing to find a negotiated solution. Ibrahim claimed that the Government lost many fighters in its special intelligence militia in the Omdurman attack. Ibrahim stated that this loss is particularly acute for leaders in the Government, as both the number of people lost in the attack is higher than the reported number, and as most of these fighters in "Gosh's army" are from the Ja'aliya and Shaggiyya tribes of the ruling elite. Ibrahim emphasized that GoS officials in the inner circle do not trust the army, as the biggest percentage of their troops are from the Nuba Mountains, the South, and Darfur. Adam agreed that morale is low in Gosh's security apparatus, and that these individuals will never fight directly in Darfur. He added that JEM "slaughtered" many of the GoS's Arab militias and janjaweed near Jebel Moon, that the Chadian opposition supported by the GoS failed in Eastern Chad, and that the GoS's only option is ineffective aerial bombardment. Adam concluded that the GoS can no longer pursue its military options.

WHO WOULD YOU WORK WITH?

6. (SBU) Ibrahim said that JEM is willing to work with any individual of the GoS, but that it might as well negotiate with "the most difficult guys like Nafie and Gosh, because if you actually broker a deal with them, it should be credible." Ibrahim added, "You need someone who will not need to break off negotiations every other minute to go get permission from Bashir to move forward." Tugot stated that he would prefer working with a credible and

reasonable figure such as Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muttriff Siddiq.

INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN PEACE PROCESS

7. (SBU) Ibrahim stated that the U.S., the French, and the Chinese should push a political process (even if it is informal) outside of the AU/UN framework. He stated that the international community's focus on UNAMID deployment will not bring lasting peace and stability to the region. Tugot separately argued the same point, saying that the U.S. (in his estimation) focuses only on security and UNAMID deployment, when it could do more to push the peace process. Ibrahim added that "nothing tangible" has come out of the French agreement to intensify its efforts on Darfur following Deng Alor's June 19 visit to Paris.

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NOT EXCITED ABOUT BASSOLE AS CHIEF MEDIATOR

7. (SBU) These JEM leaders clearly prepared for the meetings and delivered a coordinated message with very little variation. JEM's claim that they are ready "at any time" for negotiations belies their rejection of JMST-led security consultations previously scheduled (and subsequently canceled) for late May. This is only one of many examples (more to follow in septel) of how JEM attempts to bend its message to its audience. Their skepticism of Bassole's nomination should be immediately addressed, and Bassole, even in this early stage in his candidacy, should consider reaching out to rebel groups to counteract their bias against him. Other observers have commented that Bassole often relies on an interpreter to communicate in English, and does not speak Arabic, so Bassole has his work cut out of him in order to gain the confidence of all Sudanese parties to the war in Darfur.

COMMENT

9. (SBU) These JEM leaders clearly prepared for the meetings and delivered a coordinated message with very little variation. JEM's claim that they are ready "at any time" for negotiations belies their rejection of JMST-led security consultations previously scheduled (and subsequently canceled) for late May. This is only one of many examples (more to follow in septel) of how JEM attempts to bend its message to its audience. Their skepticism of Bassole's nomination should be immediately addressed, and Bassole, even in this early stage in his candidacy, should consider reaching out to rebel groups to counteract their bias against him. Other observers have commented that Bassole often relies on an interpreter to communicate in English, and does not speak Arabic, so Bassole has his work cut out of him in order to gain the confidence of all Sudanese parties to the war in Darfur.

10. (U) Part II, to be reported septel, will outline: JEM's thoughts on rebel unification; its relations with the SPLM, SLM/Minni Minnawi, Chad, and Libya; and JEM's general expectations for the content of any peace deal.

FERNANDEZ